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TO SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON FROM AMBASSADOR FORD
M. FRAKER
DEPT FOR NEA/FO FOR JEFFREY FELTMAN AND DAVID HALE; P FOR
WILLIAM BURNS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: TRANSITION OVERVIEW PAPER FOR SAUDI ARABIA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR FORD M. FRAKER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B and D)

1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Most Embassies deal with the governments of long-established nation states. In Riyadh we deal with a family, who within living memory created a new state and then named it for themselves. Preserving the unity of their diverse state and their prerogatives as the ruling family are the Al Saud's overriding priorities. They do not want, and can not afford, a religious war of civilizations, oil prices so high that they destroy demand, regional instability that threatens their borders or an Arab Israeli conflict that undermines regimes closely tied to the United States. Their interests are, to a surprising degree, aligned with our own. END SUMMARY.

Long-term Policy Objectives

2. (S/NF)

A billion Muslims turn to Mecca five times a day. What is said there in the Great Mosque matters. We want continued Saudi assistance in combating both terrorism and extremist ideologies.

Two Saudi kings have proposed plans to resolve the Arab Israeli Conflict. We want a renewed Saudi commitment to a comprehensive Middle East Peace.

From the world's largest oil exporter and most significant swing producer, we want increased and more physically secure oil production.

Saudi Arabia produces nearly half of the Arab World's GDP and is the only Middle East country in the G-20. We want the Kingdom to play a constructive role in international financial markets and continue holding most of its 460 billion dollars worth official foreign reserves in U.S. assets.

We want improved U.S.-Saudi military cooperation and interoperability.

Near-term Risks to U.S. Interests

2. (S/NF)

A successful terrorist attack on Saudi oil production facilities, a Saudi decision to significantly reduce oil production or a Saudi decision to cancel ARAMCO's ongoing efforts to increase oil production capacity by twenty five percent.

A Saudi decision to reduce official holdings of U.S. Treasury securities.

A Saudi decision to pursue nuclear energy programs without U.S. involvement.

A loss of confidence in the U.S. as a reliable supplier of defense equipment and the resulting loss of U.S. influence, market share and military interoperability.

Difficulties for Saudi travelers that discourage Saudi students, investors and policymakers from visiting the U.S.

Early Action Items

¶3. (S/NF)

Saudi Arabia is our most important ally in the Arab World. For seventy five years, the U.S.-Saudi relationship has been conducted at the highest levels of government. President Obama should visit the Kingdom within his first 100 days in office.

Saudi advice not to invade Iraq was ignored. This has colored their willingness to cooperate on a range of regional issues. An early Presidential visit would demonstrate renewed U.S. commitment to consultations and encourage greater Saudi cooperation with regards to the Peace Process, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, the Horn of Africa and repairing the global financial system.

In stark contrast to their previous policies, the Saudis are now exporting religious tolerance. President Obama should publicly support King Abdullah's Inter-Faith Dialogue. High-level USG support for this initiative will advance our efforts to defeat extremism and foster stronger Saudi cooperation on other regional security issues.

Twenty five percent of Saudi visa applicants are caught in a Security Advisory Opinion process which delays their travel from between one and four months. Thousands of potential students, tourists and business visitors are simply going elsewhere. We need to quickly reduce delays caused by this system.

How the Embassy is Pursuing Objectives and Addressing Risks

¶4. (S/NF) We regularly seek Saudi political and economic support on a wide range of regional security issues and encourage increased oil production.

¶5. (S/NF) The Joint Commission on Critical Infrastructure Protection (JCCIP) was created last May. This is a major effort to protect Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure from terrorist attacks. The Saudis believe we have been slow to deliver the training and other assistance they need. We need to move more quickly on JCCIP.

¶6. (S/NF) In order to increase the volume of Saudi oil production available for export, we have agreed to work with the Saudis on nuclear energy for domestic consumption. Such cooperation can proceed only after the Saudis are fully compliant with our nonproliferation requirements and we are pursuing this goal.

¶7. (S/NF) Saudi Arabia has proven itself to be an effective ally in combating terror and extremism. The Kingdom is our largest terrorist intelligence exchange partner in the world. With substantial U.S. cooperation, Saudi Arabia is arguably the only country in the region to have directly confronted and defeated Al-Qaeda at home.

¶8. (S/NF) We have highly successful, long-standing security assistance programs with the Ministry of Defense and the Saudi Arabian National Guard. Through JCCIP, we are beginning a third program with the Ministry of Interior. These programs support our military and counter-terrorist security objectives.

¶9. (S/NF) After a hiatus of twenty years, we have notified

Congress of significant arms sales to Saudi Arabia including:
JDAMs, AIM-9X, AWACs upgrades and over five billion dollars
worth of light armored vehicles. Future requests may include
F-15 aircraft and a major upgrade of Saudi naval forces in
the Persian Gulf.

¶10. (S/NF) A Western educated elite is essential to a more
tolerant and pluralistic Saudi Arabia. We encourage study in
the U.S., strong links between U.S. and Saudi educational
institutions and exchange programs for current and future
Saudi leaders. All of these require greater ease of travel
for Saudis going to the United States which is something we
have worked hard to secure.

FRAKER